

News Release



Controller of the State of California - Kathleen Connell

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE CONTROLLER'S AUDIT FINDS L.A. UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT OWES STATE AS MUCH AS \$120 MILLION

CONTROLLER OFFERS HELP IN CORRECTING SYSTEM ERRORS

Sacramento, July 31, 2001 – State Controller Kathleen Connell today released the final results of an audit of Los Angeles Unified School District excused absences that will affect the district's attendance funding for years to come.

The audit found \$30 million in excess claims for excused absences by Los Angeles Unified in 1996-1997. The Controller noted that the audit covered a period of time before the current administration and Superintendent Roy Romer were in place.

"I wish to emphasize my willingness to work with Superintendent Romer, his staff and members of the school board in trying to develop a system of financial management controls to assure that these types of errors do not continue at the expense of the students," said Connell.

The excused absence audit was conducted at the request of the Davis Administration and the Department of Education to determine compliance with SB 727. The law, passed in 1997, eliminated funding for excused absences but increased funding for attendance to offset the resulting loss of funding. The law established 1996-1997 as the baseline for the future funding. Therefore, any excused absences that were not properly documented in 1996-1997 may have cost the district funding for years to come.

"As a parent with two children in the Los Angeles Unified School District, I care deeply about the resources available to students," said Connell. "That is why it is with a heavy heart that today I must announce the results of an audit that will take away as much as \$120 million from our children in the next several years."

"The audit findings suggest an historical lack of regard for the education code guidelines," said Connell. "I would like to work with the district's new management to make certain these problems do not continue to plague the district and that the interests of the students are protected," Connell said.

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***To arrange interviews with State Controller Kathleen Connell,
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